

RUK MIKA

LETTERS OF A YOUNG GIRL

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OF A YOUNG GIRL

with 25 coloured pictures by the author



SIEGEL-VERLAG

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We got acquainted in Berlin. He was nearly thirty years old, of middle height, strong, dark, his chin protruding a little. He was lively and kind. We understood each other from the first moment, and in the course of our talks and frequent discussions on all possible subjects a warm friendship soon arose between us.

Sometimes we sat up till late in the night. Then Sergej used to read little stories and poems to me which he had just composed. His eyes then beamed, and when we spoke he could get so excited, that he often sat opposite to me with highly reddened cheeks. He was a dreamer and he had such a feeling for nature as I have scarcely known in anyone else. This he sometimes expressed in delicate little water-colourings. I still possess some of his pictures. One I shall always remember: An early summer morning. A light grey mist rises over the water and at a far distance two birds fly up into the clear sky. In looking at the picture you almost breathe the fresh morning air. Books were his greatest passion. He bought books as soon as he was able to afford them. With his new booktreasures he used to

bury himself at home and for days he had no interest in anything else. He forgot all around him and was carried off into a totally different world.

Unfortunately I had to leave Berlin after some time. We were both very sorry to part and promised to write to each other as often as possible. And indeed I got many letters from him. Some were full of joy and contained a lot of plans for the future, others were pessimistic, sad and full of hopeless bitterness. That was Sergej.

Once I got a letter in which he told me that he had met a young girl, a German, with whom he was going to learn German. It was a short letter. In his next letter he gave a more detailed description of his teacher whose eyes were evidently very attractive to him.

A year passed. He wrote often. Letters overflowing with mirth and a feeling of the coming spring. He was in love. In nearly every letter he invited me to come to him and of course he wanted me to meet the girl. But all circumstances were so contrary, that three years had already passed before I was able to get a holiday. Then my friend's letters came less frequently and were suddenly altered. They expressed sorrow and doubt. He wrote little about his teacher. And one day in that spring I got a letter from

him telling me that he was about to return home and to leave all his books to me. This seemed strange to me and I was worried about him. Finally I made up my mind to pay him a visit at any rate and did so at once. I did not meet him any more in Berlin, but his land-lady gave me a letter. Sergej asked me in a few words to give some of his books and a parcel of letters to the young girl. From this I gathered that the lovers had been disappointed in each other and had parted. Although I did not really know what had happened, I felt deep pity for Sergej and in my thoughts I quite spontaneously said some very harsh words to the girl to whom he had devoted himself with all his heart.

Towards evening I took the letters and set out on my way to find the address given me. On ringing the bell a kind girl opened the door. It was her sister. She showed me into the room and called Elizabeth. I waited and looked around the room in a corner of which there was a black piano with a little water-colouring of Sergej's on it. On a dark oak table with a green cover there were some books. The bright colours of spring flowers on the window-sill were fading a little in the gathering dusk. Now the door opened and Elizabeth entered. She was of middle height. Her black thick hair was combed carefully and turned up

on both sides. Her vaulted forehead was high and broad with black eye-brows over her dark brown eyes. Her face was beamingly young and fresh, not exactly pretty but already at first sight it bore an expression that beguiled one into looking at it again and again. She gave me her hand and said her name. I told her the reason for my coming. She blushed and cast down her eyes. We were silent, but her face expressed a struggle. Suddenly she raised her eyes to me and in that moment I understood why Sergej had loved her so much. There was something in these eyes which enclosed all the joy and all the pain of human life. I wanted to give her the letters as Sergej had asked me to do, but she would not take them. «Do what you like with the letters», she said.

Before returning home by the evening train I went to Sergej's rooms once more. Rather hastily I packed some books and took with me the parcel with the young girl's letters. I made up my mind to read them at home. They were compiled according to the date.

Ruk Mika.



Berlin, December 15th.

Dear Sir,

How am I to compose this letter? How shall I inform you of

my thoughts making my soul vibrate in passionate impatience? You know, I am not acquainted with you! However, what has induced me on this very day to buy that paper showing your advertisement?

Until man gets to the centre of his being, he roams and errs along unknown paths. You want to learn German. You want to learn it perfectly and, as an equivalent, instruction in Russian is offered by you, — you unknown Russian emigrant.

What destiny has led you to my country? For what reason do you want to speak my mother-tongue fluently?

Perhaps you have already found what you were advertising for. My letter may be forgotten together with many others. After all, what is it I know about you, you unknown man?

And yet I am writing to you. I completed my High-School studies a year ago. To-day all is office, type-writing,

dictation and telephon. To-morrow — or, maybe, in a year's time — university will be waiting for me. If you have an interest in other languages too, I shall assist you with pleasure. I know English well and I also speak French. I have full command of the Italian and Spanish languages. I can tell you many things about my country, its art and culture. I hope you will understand all I am writing here.

If you call on us, please ask for the street «In the Wood». It is beautiful here, and you can breathe so lightly. There is snow on the trees.

In spring, when all is in flower, gaiety and calm pervade all.

Please answer me. I shall wait for your letter. My name is

Elizabeth Mey

P. S. Will you ring me up at the office?

E. M.



Berlin, December 31st.

Dear Sergej Nicolaievich,

While reading my letter, do not forget to tear off a leaf from your almanac. To-day is New Year's Day, and I hope the New Year will give you much gladness and happiness and bring you new acquaintances and love.

Yesterday — you surely remember yesterday — we had a long and suggestive talk, words flowed like a stream and time passed away too fast. Then you said good-bye and I went back the same way we had gone together a little while before. There was a profound silence, and the snow glittered on the dark green hue of the fir-trees. It was wonderful.

Please tell me, are you not mistaken in praising our present time with such enthusiasm? You said yourself, modern men are always worried and worn out, always in haste for fear of getting pushed out of their way. Where is the limit between recreation and tiring work? Like a slave, man is inwardly ready to oppose the universe in the morning, but in the evening he has lost that readiness and is simply waiting for orders.

Do we not all resemble those slaves whose hearts make opposition but whose powers of will are too weak and poor? Won't you admit that this civilisation created by us with sweat and blood, clutches us as it were with iron tongs just as mercilessly as we have given it to the world.

But perhaps you may be right, for who really knows life and its laws?

Farewell, and do not forget to tear that leaf out of your almanac.

Elizabeth



Berlin, March 5th.

Dear Sergej Nicolaievich,

The weather is cold and nasty, it rains, and the wood is wrapped in a slight veil of mist. And that is March, precursor of young life, sunshine, joy and warmth! Through window-panes where rain-drops are pouring down I look at the street which is overflowed with water.

The room is warm, still, and cosy. There is a sweet odour of flowers which are in a vase on the table, and in an other apartment, someone is playing the piano. I listen to the sounds of the piano and to the pelting rain, and I should like to be with you, joking or speaking of some problem.

When looking at your picture, I just feel as if I saw you in person. There is so much life and feeling in that little painting, and I think that no one but you could reproduce all that in this manner. I believe you to be capable of attaining a great deal in this line and of making yourself a name. Such talents are not given to everybody, and not every one knows so perfectly how to express his feelings.

How warm and cosy is this room, how lovely the fragrance
of those flowers on the small table. Outdoors a storm has
risen and last year's dead leaves are dancing in the wind.

Elizabeth



Berlin, March 20th.

Dear Sergej Nicolaievich,

What can be said of music in words, you proud man? Well, you speak and write a great deal, but what is all that? The more words, the less feeling and the farther we are removed from those summits transparent with sunlight. Believe me, that is true.

Music is a great incomprehensible power, it overrules our feelings and influences our mind. Our thoughts are then carried into another world fragrant with roses and free from pain and sorrow.

Every kind of music speaks its own language and has both sentiment and beauty of its own, so that you are not able to express the true nature of music in words.

Only he who does not understand it, likes talking about it and discussing it, wanting to prove a great deal.

You can often hear a well known melody, but every time, you will feel it differently and often it will tell you something new, something else.

Music contains the deepest and most secret feelings of mankind.

The last time you were with us, I played your favourite polonaise to you. I believe you looked at me without noticing me, and I know your thoughts wandered far away.

When I addressed you, you smiled so peculiarly, and in that moment you were very near to me.

Evening is come and it has grown dark in the room. Now I shall play your favourite polonaise for you. People say that when you think of a person intensely, this person feels your thoughts at the same moment.

Farewell, I think spring-time is coming.

Elizabeth



Berlin, April 1st.

Dear Sergej Nicolaievich,

Many thanks for your nice letter, your remembrance, and your hearty greetings. Yesterday I spent the whole day at home, reading your book, writing, and thinking of you a great deal.

You ask me if I am not feeling dull to-day and longing for something? Oh no, for joy, deepest joy can also be found on dim and disagreeable days. That joy which is caused by fulfilment of a momentary desire, is but a worthless joy, indeed. Compared to it how much more powerful is that joy which we, ourselves, create, drawing it with effort from the depths of our soul. This kind of joy gives us happiness and peace. Godless longing is never to be the aim of our life, but only that joy which arises out of our very heart. I believe, God cannot be a sorrowful God, or he would never have been able to create so beautiful a world, so full of many wonderful colours, nor to give such joyful love.

It may be that sorrow inspires us with great thoughts or develops creative ideas, but it will never become inspiration or the source of a rich soul.

I have neither want nor wish for sky-blue paths in ever-blooming lands where birds sing only happy melodies.

No, I do not want to find everything ready and done. How should I get on in such a country? Would there be any scope for free thoughts and dreams, would I have any chance of building up a new fairyland of my own? Believe me, the sky-blue colour alone would lame my fancy.

Of course, I should like a fairyland and I long for ever-green meadows, but all that is to be my own creation, made of nothing and, perhaps, by fighting against all.

And when, at times, I suffer from doubts, when I feel depressed, I still find some little joy that gives me new strength again.

I wish you much joy and sunshine, you too, as much as you may get. Write to me, I think of you.

Elizabeth



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Berlin, May 10th.

Dear Sergej,

There is nothing that excites me more and distances me more from people than their laziness and indifference with regard to their own life.

What can life give to such people who yawn when they wake up and don't know how to spend their leisure hours? After a short time everything is slow to them and they can hardly conceive how beautiful the world is and how much life can give us in return for only a little energy and work.

Elizabeth



Berlin, May 15th.

Dear Sergej,

Please pardon my writing to you on such a scrap of paper.

I am lying in the wood, that wood through which we strolled together a long time ago.

It is early yet, the sun has hardly risen, but the birds have already been singing a long time.

Except for the morning breeze passing over the tops of the firs, except for the rustling of the bushes, there is but one sound — the song of the awakened birds. There are so many here, and if I only could I would like to write down what they are singing to me.

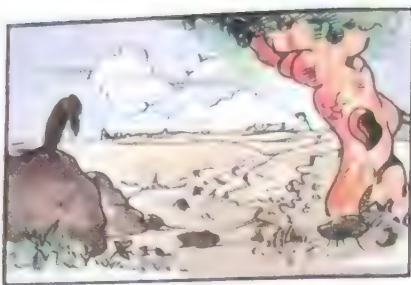
It is so wonderful here and so pleasurable, I fully abandon myself to this morning's charm.

In an hour, I shall go to the office, a little while after, I shall be sitting at the typewriter again, clattering away, answering the telephone, and running up and down carrying out the head-clerk's orders.

But that does not matter, these are but trifles, time passes away very fast, — soon I shall be back in the wood. Whenever you have any time, please come, I am always waiting for you. I expect you to come and take part in my happiness.

Do come, spring is here, and many lovely flowers are blossoming.

Elizabeth



Berlin,
May 25th.

Dear Sergej,

Even if my path

should be useless, narrow, forgotten, and over-grown with grass, I shall prefer it to a wide and comfortable but strange one.

For this reason it is so difficult and almost impossible to me to understand those who are quite satisfied with their life and do not take any pains to build it up and shape it according to their own individuality.

Why do they endeavour all their life to fit up their houses as well as possible? Why do they take the trouble to dress well and look well? Why?

Looking around, Sergej, you will recognise that the greater part of the people leads a really worthless life — without colours, without aims, just like a worn-out every-day garment.

While hunting after fortune, how many people push aside those little lucky chances that often lie in their way unex-

pectedly. They only want a very big chance and tread under their heels all that doesn't answer it. They clip their own wings which might perhaps have carried them very far.

Sergej, do not disdain little things, for they make your life delightful and great!

Elizabeth



Berlin, May 30th.

Dear Sergej,

You are right, — our thoughts are really like a stream. Sometimes they flow slowly and deliberately,

are calm and strong. In that case they are deep and hardly comprehensible in their wide scope. These are both serious and creative.

But there are other thoughts, like careless sources in spring, bubbling loud and merrily from afar. They are not profound, these thoughts, but they fill nature round about them with their blitheness. There are many of them, but every one of them is different and sings another melody to you.

On any account do not forget that, besides streams and sources, there is a swamp round about us. A monotonous stagnant swamp. Take care to always cover your feet with its mud.

Elizabeth



Berlin, June 10th.

Dear Sergej,

I have come back very late and
my people are already asleep.
Your letter is on my table. I
believe, Sergej, that you alone

comprehend and feel my sentiments. To-day I could not
but think of this world which exists from all eternity and
will ever be, and of my being anxious to have a share in
those eternal things. Who created me? Who gave me my
mental power and feeling, while withholding the possibility
of conceiving the everlasting things of this earth?

I sought for an answer. I clung to religion with passion,
but I got no answer from there. There are so many reli-
gions, Sergej, that I am not able to enter into them all.
They all have almost the same aims, but they are opposed
to each other.

Then I turned to philosophy and to the great wise men.
Here I likewise sought for that great truth which I should
like to comprehend with my whole being. But what the
one praises the other denies, and the more I plunged
into doctrines and the more I became acquainted with

the principal laws, the farther I was removed from that great truth my mind was seeking. Where really is that truth, Sergej, where?

You propose work to me as a remedy for restlessness. Well, that remedy, certainly, is not bad, it may be the best of many I have tried.

Well then, I shall work, using my muscles or my brains, but that is not all we need. Do understand that I do not consist of my body alone — which must be fed —, that besides my mind, I have a soul too. And it is my soul that is longing for light and yearning for truth.

Perhaps that is why I feel so lonely and so absolutely isolated from everybody, so that, sometimes, I am frightened at the loneliness and cruelty of life.

In the evening, when looking at the pale sky, both my thoughts and my soul are filled with that loneliness of heart. Everything I loved, seems to become immensely remote, worthless, and indifferent to me.

I sometimes wake up at night, and feel the gloomy wings of darkness settle on me pressing me to the edge of an unknown abyss, and then all hope of day-break dies away. There is cruelty and pain in such nights.

Everybody is sleeping already, it is late. I shall fall asleep soon too and, perhaps, I shall see you and your eyes in my dreams. I love your eyes, they are full of life and love. Whenever you look at me, I am thrilled and I feel at ease and happy in my heart.

Sleep well, Sergej, my thoughts are with you.

Elizabeth



Berlin, July 15th.

Dear Sergej,

Please pardon my not having written to you for so long. Not that I had had no time or too much of it.

I began writing several times — I wanted to write you a letter in order to tell you all I am thinking and feeling, all I am dreaming of, and about all that I should like to do. However, Sergej, do believe me, you cannot always write down all that is moving you. This is difficult to explain.

There are many letters — business letters, official ones, and many, many others too. We are always able to write such letters and for these we always have a ready answer, almost learnt by heart. Their style is always the same, and one letter looks like the other.

Besides those, there are also letters we are inspired with by some power and which we write out of joy or out of sorrow. Such letters are rare, and our heart as well as our soul have a share in them. Nearly all your letters be-

long to these. They contain much sunshine and gladness or they are full of sorrow and longing.

You are a peculiar man, Sergej! I believe you suffer much and at the thought of your being alone at this moment, I feel depressed.

You must know, Sergej, I think of you, and even when trying not to do so my thoughts involuntarily turn to you.

Be calm, Sergej, quite calm. To-morrow all will be well, everything and all will be well to-morrow.

Your Elizabeth



Berlin, July 18th.

Dear Sergej,

Yesterday the night was very calm. I opened the window, but there was no sound. No voice, no step broke the stillness. Softly I stepped out of my room and went into the garden. All was asleep, trees and flowering

beds too. I went from shrub to shrub and my hand glided over the sleeping twigs. I inhaled the intoxicating scent of blooming lime trees, and the fragrance of carnations was carried to me on the breeze. Blessed be nature! Oh God, how I feel grateful to Thee for each flower, each shrub, for all the beauty that fills my heart and makes it overflow with enchanting joy.

I should like to stroke every leaf and every blade before leaving this place. A twig is giving way somewhere. The stars are shining.

I stop. I am pervaded by thoughts and dreams. A great calm comes over me. I lean against a tree and I softly whisper confused words. It may be a prayer.

How the stars shine! The stillness of the night seems to sing, and the world is full of a sublime magic.

Behold, my God, I thank Thee for this night, I thank Thee for the rustling branches and the sweet scent pervading this flowering night. I thank Thee for the life Thou gavest me, for my breath, for my happiness, and for all and everything.

In this stillness, nature seems to speak in a low rustling and in a light breeze. And that, just that is the being of nature. It is God my soul is addressing. I clasp the tree more closely and listen to each sound. A breeze passes over the trees, passes through the leaves, and caresses my shoulders.

How lovely the smell of carnations! The wind carries their scent to me, kisses my face, and embraces me with its invisible tender arms.

Birds begin singing somewhere in the distance. Day will break soon, it is dusky yet, but I feel — morning is coming. There are tears in my eyes, and I am thrilled with joy, with very great joy.

Then I am back in my room, and lying I listen into the darkness. I cannot sleep, for I still feel the breath of nature and I inhale the fragrance of invisible blossoms.

I shall be very far from you to-morrow, I shall go to the south of Germany. I shall be far from you and, at the same time, close to you, too. Think that above us is the same sky in which the same stars are shining.

I shall be back in a month. During this time of being alone I shall make up my mind as to my feelings for you. All is so new and unaccustomed to me. I don't know myself any more. There are two lives, two feelings in me as if I were dreaming an enchanting dream.

Your Elizabeth



Würzburg, July 23rd.

Dear Sergej,

To-day a postman stopped me in the street and handed me a letter—your letter, which gave me much pleasure and yet made me feel a little sad. I am sorry to think that you are so lonely now. Do not give way to sad thoughts, my dear, things will take a good turn.

Outside my window the river is flowing, the broad Main. Looking out of my window. I see a bridge to the right with all sorts of saints on it. It is impossible to recollect their names, because there are too many of them. To the left — there is an exceedingly beautiful cathedral behind which many roofs and green domes of churches are to be seen. Some of them are onion-shaped and like the flame of a candle, others seem proudly to hasten heavenwards. And I have to recollect over and over again, that I am in Würzburg, that town of many, many churches.

In the town I met nuns with odd-looking wide hoods. Their faces are almost entirely hidden and I could only see their eyes that expressed a great calm. I also met monks with big black hats and with rosaries in their hands.

Yesterday morning I attended a mass in a Catholic church. Nuns sang and somewhere, for above me, an organ was heard. It was solemn and beautiful. And then the residence of Würzburg! The most beautiful I have ever seen! On entering, you get into a large lofty hall. I was told that the wonderful ceiling had been painted a hundred years ago. The colours have not changed and are just as bright as they were a hundred years ago.

Then, on mounting marble stairs, you reach the hall where, formerly, princes and bishops assembled for councils. In the middle there is a round table and chairs, but to the right and hardly visible there is a niche laid out with silk and in it stands a wonderful bed over which lace is spread. One cannot assert that the deliberations must have been very tedious and monotonous. I could not help smiling. Love is eternal and to be found everywhere.

In the evening I was at home again. I read and heard the murmuring Main outside. Just now, church-bells are ringing again. Here there are so many of them and each of them has a different chime.

These chimes remind us that time passes away and that life knows only a continuous progress.

Elizabeth



Rothenburg, July 30th.

Dear Sergej,

The sun is shining and shedding its light on the sheet of paper on which I am writing to you. From afar I hear the glad chimes of bells. In verdant gardens the brightest flowers are blossoming and all around me crickets are chirping merrily.

The bells are still to be heard. The streets look as if they had just been washed, they are so clean. Everywhere peasants are to be seen in their Sunday clothes, and everything shows that to-day is a holiday. Everywhere there is a merry confusion of voices, and when people greet one another they say „God greet you“.

I am sitting in the grass in full view of the town and with the clear blue sky above me. I glide down on the grass and, for a long time, I look at the blue which becomes strangely transparent to my eyes. It is hot.

In the valley some houses gleaming white can be discerned. But they are so small and seem to dwindle out of sight.

All that is human diminishes and comes to nothing. Eternal nature alone remains great and living.

I close my eyes, I want to sleep. The sun kisses my forehead and, somewhere, the merry foaming river can be heard. I feel as though I must spring up and stretch out my arms towards the light; as if I must call out »You people, behold, how wonderful this world is, how immense the gifts of nature are«. I am happy, Sergej, oh, how happy I feel.

Elizabeth



Berlin, August 25th.

My dear Sergej,

On coming home from you last night, I could not fall asleep for a long time. It was too hot in bed so that I had to get up and open the window. The night was warm and calm. Stars gleamed brightly. All around everyone was asleep.

I sat down at the window and then I thanked God for giving you to me, — you who are so loving and so good, so full of life and health.

All around everything is quite calm. The stars are twinkling and their twinkling seems to become soft music. In me there is a great calm and stillness. And from that calm and that melody perceptible only to me, suddenly rose the desire to go out into the sleeping town and to stroke each stone and each step you walked over. I should like to do a good turn to someone, to ease someone's hard and sad life, but I should like best to be pure, pure of body and heart.

Perhaps my love for you grew so strong and beaming when we were separated and I was far from you.

Love needs separation, a certain distance to keep its strength alive.

Love — is beauty. It is like the wind which we cannot see but only feel. The more violent the storm, the more traces it leaves behind, the clearer we recognise its strength and greatness.

And so is love. It can be strong and passionate and destructive or calm and devoted like the soft rustling of the wind.

When we contemplate love from afar it seems quite near, and when it is really close to us it moves farther and farther away.

Love is a great force extending through the universe and moving it. For love's sake men become murderers, for love's sake we accomplish super-human works, love makes us like gods. The first word was — love. Love has ever been in existence, it has been present since the world began. Love is capable of raising a man as well as it is able to plunge him into abysses to rend his soul.

What really is — love?

It has thousands of names and thousands of faces, we do not know what love is.

My pulses beat and my dry lips involuntarily whisper words of love, they whisper your name and, in my mind, I kiss you.

Elizabeth

Berlin, August 26th.



My Sergej,

You are mistaken in thinking that women love only handsome and intelligent men.

There are a lot of so-called handsome and clever men who even have responsible posts. They may be learned men, politicians, or artists, but these are no reasons for making women love them. They think women an incidence, a vision speedily fading away. A woman is not comprehensible to their nerves, to their blood, she is but an incidental event to them, you know. Do you understand — an incidental event and nothing, nothing more at all.

But there are ugly, untalented, and unknown men that are not ever mentioned, and, nevertheless, women are ready to give their lives for them, to offer them up their honour and all that is dear to a woman.

Can you understand that, Sergej?

I think that arises from the fact that to those men a woman means everything. She seems to them the most sublime that can be attained in life, and they love her not only with their senses but with their whole being, with their soul.

Elizabeth



Berlin, August 30th.

My Sergej,

Stars are still reflected in the dew and show the lonely wanderer his way. It is still dark, but, in the east the approaching day-light is to be felt, the coming of a new day.

To-day I am expecting the young day in the wood. It is

warm and still, and you only hear the trees whisper to each other softly and mysteriously. Tiny shrubs are like enchanted beings watching over the wood's stillness and calm. The trees look like giants, they are the knights of a mighty realm. At my feet invisible flowers of sweet smell are blossoming. My heart exults with love, it loves those little, unimportant blossoms also, and so I go down on my knees and kiss the scented calyxes that are cool and filled with dew. A wonderful joy seizes me and I could keep on kissing these cool leaves of flowers and pressing my face into them.

Somewhere, quite in the distance, the unsteady twittering of a bird is heard. Maybe that bird is dreaming, maybe it is waking up.

And all around it is still again. Only high up, in the tree tops, a summer wind is rustling. Stars still gleam in the sky, and the longer I look at the starry sky the more stars seem to be discernible to me, and, at last the whole sky looks like a glittering, gleaming dome. The wood is murmuring softly. I am surrounded by the bewildering scent of earth, flowers, and trees, and involuntarily words rise to my lips blessing this eternal, powerful, living nature.

Then the voice of a bird is heard again, thrilling, gay, and full of life, and all at once, the wood is full of thrills and chirps, just like a song in praise of the rising sun and young life's dawning. While birds are singing their morning-prayer, the wood wakes up and its language is powerful and solemn. All sounds in the wood, all singing and thrilling, all rustling of trees are united into one powerful music.

Leaning against a tree I listen. Why are you not here at this moment, Sergej, you whom I love with all my heart! My soul's longing grows great and strong — I think of you, Sergej, and it seems to me you must feel my beating heart.

Oh my friend, my only friend, kissing the night and the young morning I think of you. And stars change into your eyes which are so endlessly far off this moment. My soul

seeks you and does not find you. I should like to hurry through all the dark streets to you, you whom I love with all my soul. But I seek in vain and nowhere can I find you.

You are beautiful, my friend, and I see no fault in you. You have my heart and my soul, you have taken possession of my thoughts. You are my lord and my master, and your kisses are like dark wine, — you are the joy and the happiness of my life.

My friend, my dear, dear Sergej, you are like the sun and those gleaming stars above me. You resemble a fragrant garden and a living source.

When I sleep, my heart is awake, for the sound of your voice does not allow it to sleep.

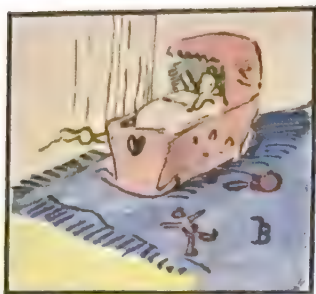
What are friends and acquaintances to me? You are my friend, my very, very best friend!

May all the birds sing you songs of praise, may you be granted and everlasting great love and joy. May the rising sun guide your pure thoughts and give you joy and happiness in your work.

It is full dawn — the young day is come!

Do you hear me, Sergej? How much I love you, Sergej, how much I love you!

Elizabeth



Berlin, September 3rd.

Dear Sergej,

Please tell me, do you think
that one day is like another?

Just as two days are not the same, so every single person
lives his life according to his own individuality.

How many there are that know love from their earliest
childhood. How simply they give their feelings away, how
carelessly they receive love. Everything is natural and
clear to them. Love is no more to them than a song,
than a stroll through blooming fields.

Then there are those who seek long for what they are
used to call love. Love does not come to them of its own
accord, they have to fight and suffer for it.

Finally, there are those — and they are many — who come
and love you, laugh and talk to you and vanish again with-
out leaving a gap. They do not really love any one. Love
remains something unknown to them, they know no deep
emotions of the soul.

So different is human love, Sergej, and that I wanted to
tell you.

Elizabeth



Berlin, September 15th.

Dear Sergej,

Yesterday I wanted to ring you up, but after our last meeting, after all you told me, I no longer dared to speak to you.

Why do you make your life so difficult? What for? If a student invites me to his birthday party, there surely is no harm in it. What are these people to me, since my heart belongs to you? Believe me, Sergej, no one but you means anything to me. Do believe me.

Everything is alright now. Remember what I told you about my meeting that Norwegian. How superficially you judge me! I shall never be altered by any one.

What we have experienced together is not dead, it is still alive in my heart. And it grows stronger and stronger, though that may against my will. Do you think me capable of forgetting how strongly our feelings and our whole beings were fused into one? Do you believe I could ever forget those wonderful evenings, our making music together or your words? All that lives in my heart.

Sergej, do remember that evening when we feared that all might go the wrong way and how happy we felt a few days after. How could we forget such moments? And whoever could do so?

Such a thing cannot be forgotten. It remains with me — maybe against my wish — but there it is.

Our life can be so beautiful, Sergej. Of course, there are conflicts, there are hard and serious struggles,— but there are also hours of perfect and real happiness, hours as harmonious as the song of a bird, hours like a poem in their beauty. Why, you once said yourself, »Live as long as you can«, are you not going to remain true to your own words?

It is so fine outdoors, Sergej, so clear and warm. Look at the sky or at this rich verdure, listen to the twittering of the birds. Do you not hear creation's own great song of praise? Do not forget those beautiful moments we experienced together. Do look around you! Then you will see that all our cares are small and vain. Remember our evenings and smile, and in smiling, do write me some words.

Elizabeth



Berlin,
September 20th.

Dear Sergej,

Yes, we are forsaken
in this world. Every
day we hasten across
paths and wilds, and,

staggering under the load of our own cares, we fall down,
get up again, push away others and finally vanish into the
unknown.

Shall we keep on wandering in this way for a long time?
That is difficult to know. Life seems too long and too
troublesome to some people and too short to others.

We are quite forsaken here. Does anybody understand us?
We are always wanting to express our cares, our dreams,
and, occasionally, our sentiments too. But we are not ca-
pable of listening to others and don't like doing so, and
finally we understand the others just as little as they do us.

We are quite forsaken here.

Elizabeth



Berlin, December 31st.

Dear Sergej,

New year again. Do not forget to tear off a leaf from your almanac and — if only for one moment — ask yourself what you have given during the last year to those you love with all your heart.

Your letters are before me on the table according to their date. Some of them tell me of your happiness and light-heartedness, others are full of sorrow, doubts, and weariness of life. Some letters I like particularly, they contain many wonderful ideas, they are full of love and sunshine. Together with your drawings, they would make up a fine book. You ought to compile it, — even if only to have an aim in life, at least for some time. We are not given a perfect life and must exert our will to form a whole out of the fragments of every single experience.

By indifference and lack of understanding we can spoil the best material, whereas great and beautiful things may be drawn out of the monotony of every day life.

What can we do to prevent the river-bed of our life from becoming marshy, so that our wings may carry us calmly and safely into mysterious heights?

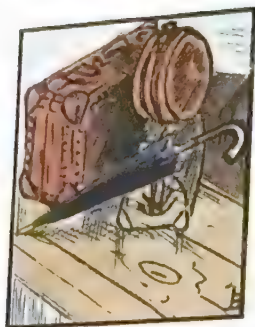
I believe, we need an idea, — an idea endowing us with sufficient strength to get rid of that morbid pessimism in hard times. Only ideas lead us to the beautiful. They are the eternal all-warming fire, encouraging us to soar above the commonplace. And then if you find a mate whom you love and who shares your opinions, you may esteem yourself very happy. Then you need not be in dread of any storms of life.

Remember, Sergej, to-morrow will be New Year's Day. How rapidly time passes away! All is in continual motion and only motion is life. When ceasing to flow, the river turns into a marsh.

Do not stop, Sergej, there is so much life in you, you have so many talents, and it would be a pity to leave the unused. Keep the eternal flame burning and your stream free of useless grass.

When tearing off the almanac-leaf, remember, Sergej, what you have given to those whom you love.

Elizabeth



Berlin, May 20th.

Dear Sergej,

To-morrow I shall leave Berlin for some days. I am longing for expanse and new sceneries and I want to forget Berlin at least for a short time. My sister and I are off together. She is just packing and wishes to be remembered to you.

She is a very nice girl, and I am surprised that you did not make better friends with her. I think you would be very happy with her. You ought to bestow more attention on her.

Last week, I made the personal acquaintance of our lecturer. He lectures on the Greek language at the university. He is a very intelligent man. His hair is black and his eyes are beautiful. Yesterday he said to me jokingly, his and my eyes had a remarkable likeness. Strange, isn't it?

I shall arrange your becoming acquainted with each other. He intends travelling after the war and he even asked me to accompany him. I do not know at all what to tell him. In his presence I feel small and so insignificant, that often I don't seem to recognise myself.

Now I want freedom, freedom over and over again. Tomorrow I shall be at the sea-side.

Elizabeth



Berlin, September 15th.

Dear Sergej,

I keep on thinking of those days we spent together, of that winter which vanished so rapidly, without leaving a trace. How much I loved you at that time! My God, I thought the whole world was mine and you seemed to be the God of Love himself. Why has all that come to an end so rapidly, so surprisingly rapidly, and in such an incomprehensible way? Whose fault is it? Mine, or the other's or perhaps yours alone?

Sometimes I cannot understand life.

Why after knowing and having loved each other truly do we become indifferent to each other after some time? Why, Sergej? How is it you seem so strange to me now that I can't understand you any longer?

Is it his doing?

I believe our relationship is now without the soul which, in former days, gave us warmth and led us to meadows of eternal spring.

When you had my heart, all your restlessness was gone and you reposed on the laurels of your bliss. But that was only the beginning of our life, the first chapter of our romance — you however already put a stop to it.

What we gained together was nothing yet, it was only the germ of our mutual life and this germ died when it became evident that we had no aim in common.

What joined us together, what light showed us our way, what gave us strength to overcome obstacles? — Nothing, nothing . . .

Had we but one mutual thought greater than ourselves?

Was there ever such a thought?

And if such a thought never existed, every struggle was in vain — we should ever have accused our fate and bemoaned our disappointed hopes. If we want to live for ourselves alone without seeking anything higher than our personal interests, our life will be void and colourless.

Man's aim ought never to be another person, not even the person whom he loves and for whom he is ready to sacrifice his life, his thoughts, his feeling.

Whose fault is it? Yours, mine or that third person's?

Elizabeth

Berlin, December 12th.



Sergej,

No, do not come! Do not wound me even more. My pen is lying on the paper and I am thinking. Well, then — full stop, the end. That was our life, those were our days of happiness and sunshine. Carrying back my memory, I feel pervaded by warmth. A sharp wind is howling out of doors, and I — I am suffering,

because I have left you and because after my short spring-time I vanish from you so quickly and inconceivably.

My heart is like a wilderness with a scent of earth. All nature is dead, there are neither trees nor birds, all is void.

I feel no guilt that it happened like that. Somehow it has come out of itself. Just as a new day breaks or a new ray of the sun begins shining.

Sergej, you are so full of life, so full of good and noble endeavours that you will soon forget me for the sake of your work. You can paint and write — describe our life or those golden days we spent together.

Once upon a time there was a writer in England. He loved a girl, but the girl fell ill and died. After her death he gathered up all her letters and published them in a book. The book proved successful. He began to do literary work. He had loved her very much, so he still lived on his loving her. I shall send you one of his books together with an English poem — it will inspire you with many, many thoughts referring to us two.

I wonder why am writing to you, since I am not destined to continue loving you. But once more I want to be quite near to you, for then I feel less unhappy.

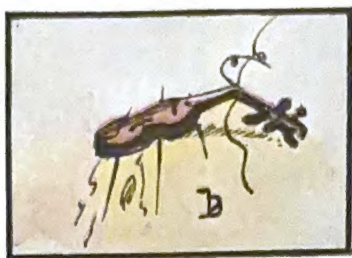
When thinking of your reading these lines, I feel as if I were watching your shoulders, your gestures, and your eyes — and so we are a little closer to each other. I shall return your painting »Light and Shadow«. You liked it very much. And so it is always to remind you of our youth and spring time.

I must bid farewell to you now. My people are up already, and my sister will be waking soon. Forgive me, Sergej, I thank you for every day spent together.

Be happy, Sergej, forgive me all pain I caused you. Forgive me that I could not kneel down and beg your pardon.

I do so in my heart. Be happy. I thank you once again —
for every day, for every hour. God alone knows how much
I am suffering. I cannot continue writing. Forgive me and
forget your

Elizabeth



A rare old violin, 'twas an old Stradivarius,
Was broken and mended a dozen times over,
But touched by the hand of a master, its music
Was richer and sweeter than ever before.

So often the heart that is broken by sorrow
Or wounded by malice, betrayal or wrong,
Is purer thereafter and wiser and stronger
And utters a sweeter and tenderer song.

